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FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN

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The Meaning of a Kiss
Different Historiographical Approaches to the Sixties in the Netherlands

Mineke Bosch

A Famous Kiss

On August 26, 1969 at the historical site of the castle Muiderslot, a memorable kiss was exchanged between the 'romantic decadent' writer Gerard Reve (1923) and the Catholic Minister of Culture, Leisure and Social Work, Marga Klompé (1912).[1] It happened at the occasion of the presentation of the "P. C. Hooft Prize", the most important and at the time still a state prize for literature. Both of the involved persons were pioneers in their own fields.

He, Gerard Reve, was a publicly gay writer who in 1947 had made his entry in the world of literature with a prize winning book "De Avonden" (The Evenings) in which he gave an merciless picture of lower middle class life. In the early Fifties he had been denied a travel grant by the Catholic Minister of Culture Joseph Cals for his trespassing the boundaries of 'public morality' in his work: he had hinted at masturbation in his short story "Melancholia". In 1966 – one year after Reve had converted to Catholicism – he was prosecuted for blasphemy resulting from the accusation of a member of the Orthodox Protestant Party. Reve had imagined God coming to his door in the shape of a small grey donkey which he would then lead to his small room in the attic to tenderly take possession of Him. In 1968 he was cleared of the charge and what is more: he came out a 'better person', as his own defence at the trial which emphasised the importance of free speech was widely appreciated.[2]

1 For a quick introduction see J. Bosmans, Klompé, Margaretha Albertina Maria (1912–1986), in: Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland, <http://www.inghist.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/BWN/lemmata/bwn4/klompe>; visited: 2008-11-28; and Gerard Reve in: Wikipedia, <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerard_Reve>.

2 For all the documents involved in the trial cf. Jan Fekkes, De God van je tante, ofwel het Ezel-proces van Gerard Kornelis van het Reve. Een documentaire, Amsterdam 1968.

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She, Marga Klompé, was a pioneer as well, being the first woman to reach the top strata of the political landscape. Raised in a Catholic family she earned her way through a university education in chemistry. During the war she was active in the resistance, and joined the *Women's Voluntary Union* in 1943. In 1945 she was one of the founders and a long time president of the *Catholic Women's Dispute* that pressed the Catholic political elite with the demand for women's participation in party leadership and in political functions. In 1947 she was appointed in the Dutch delegation to the General Assembly of the *United Nations* and in this capacity drew the attention of the *Catholic party* leadership for her sharp and analytical interventions. Before and after she became a minister she was active in numerous political and social bodies and Catholic organisations. Under her guidance in 1963 the "General Assistance law" was adopted, that guaranteed every Dutch citizen the right to a minimum income in case of unemployment. In her words this was a major revolution in social relations, from poverty relief as 'charity' to poverty relief as a human right.

The Kiss was recorded by the press and immediately caused an enormous stir. In Parliament questions were asked about the event, and soon after rumours circulated about Klompé being a lesbian. But especially remembered about Reve – more than in the memory of Klompé – is the event itself which is always recorded as an act of rebellion against the establishment embodied by Klompé. In this contribution I will give a context to this popular interpretation and discuss also an opposing view being both present in the Dutch historiography about the 1960s. In doing so, I will point out the shortcomings of both interpretations in their reliance on Sixties' terminology referring to a 'conflict of generations'. Using gender as a category of analysis, I will suggest another reading of the sixties that is less dramatic, and recognises women like Klompé as ground-breaking historical characters.

The Sixties in the Netherlands

In his book "De eindeloze jaren zestig" (The Endless Sixties) the late historian Hans Righart summed up the various ways in which the 'Sixties' in the Netherlands are defined: as the period between 1960 and 1969 (Righart, Kennedy), 1965 and 1975 (Verbij), 1963 and 1973 (Woltjer), 1958–1973 (Kossmann).[3] This variation made Doeko Bosscher decide that to specify years in order to date the era was simply impos-

3 Hans Righart, De eindeloze jaren zestig. Geschiedenis van een generatieconflict, Amsterdam/Antwerpen 1995; James C. Kennedy, Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw. Nederland in de jaren zestig, Amsterdam/Mepper 1995; Antoine Verbij, Tien rode jaren. Links radicalisme in Nederland, 1970–1980, Amsterdam 2005; E. H. Kossmann, De Lage Landen, 1780–1980. Twee eeuwen Nederland en België, vol. 2, 1914–1980, Amsterdam/Brussel 1986; J. J. Woltjer, Recent verleden. De geschiedenis van Nederland in de twintigste eeuw, Amsterdam 1992.

sible, while Righart himself suggested that it was perhaps best to use a wider range of years for different aspects of the big leap into modernity that took place in the Netherlands between about 1955–1975.[4] Whatever the actual years, the authors all assess that some major social, cultural and political shifts occurred during this time. Traditional religious and socio-political barriers broke down which for almost a century had characterised the pillarised society that The Netherlands had become after 1870.[5] The welfare state was formed and the educational system was adapted to a more democratised and less socially segmented society. In general, the Dutch standard of living improved. In these years, imaginative groups like *Provo* (from the term provocation), *Kabouters* (Goblins), *Dolle Mina* (Mad Mina) and the general student protests (1969) were at their highpoint. The playful and media adapted protest these groups developed still feature in today's imagination and loom large in collective Dutch memory of the Sixties.

Dutch demonstrations and protests were relatively easygoing. The 'anti-smoke magician' Robert Jasper Grootveld, who ironically died recently of a lung disease, organized happenings in Amsterdam that baffled administrators and policemen. In 1965, the 'rebels' who participated in these happenings launched the magazine *Provo* which turned into a movement of provocative protests against 'the Establishment' that made people into addicts of the capitalist consumer market. *Provo* took the lead in the actions against the intended marriage of Crown Princess Beatrix and the German Claus von Amsberg ("Claus 'raus") who in his youth happened to have been a member of the *Hitlerjugend* and had served in the *Wehrmacht*. The year 1966 was christened a 'year of disaster' (*rampjaar*) by Righart in his earlier mentioned book.[6] Already the princely marriage on March 10 led to major protests in the Dutch capital. But the most violent demonstration organised by the trade unions took place in June when several persons were wounded by police fire and one person died. As it turned out, this man was not killed by police force, but had suffered from a heart attack.[7] The outcome of this investigation, however, provoked an even angrier reaction as the authorities were not to be trusted anyway.

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4 Doeko Bosscher, De dood van een metselaar. Rede etc., Groningen 1992, 34. Righart, Jaren, see note 3, 15.

5 Since the Dutch-American political scientist Arend Lijphart's 1968 study on the pillarisation of the Dutch society between 1870 and 1970, its vertical organisation is seen as the basic organisation of the Dutch nation in a Roman-Catholic, a Protestant, a socialist and a neutral 'pillar'; cf. Arend Lijphart, Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek, Amsterdam 1968 (engl.: The Politics of Accommodation. Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands, Berkeley 1968).

6 The *rampjaar* is a standard historical term that refers to the year 1672. Righart recycles also other – major historical – concepts such as *Dolle Dinsdag* (Mad Tuesday) that refers to September 5, 1944 when rumours ran high that the *Allied Forces* would succeed in liberating the Netherlands from the Nazi occupation. That day large groups of Dutch Nazis and Germans tried to get away from the Netherlands causing a serious chaos. I think that the (journalistic) use of such terms contributed to the popularity of the book.

7 Doeko Bosscher, Dood, see note 4.

The street events reached a height in 1967 when an estimated 100 000 people participated in protests.[8] A major accomplishment is often seen in the occupation by students of the Maagdenhuis, the administrative centre of the *Amsterdam University*, from 16 to 21 May 1969, one year after the student protests elsewhere. In this view the Maagdenhuis occupation was the cradle for the political and radical movements of the Seventies. Others, however, have claimed that this event was a ridiculous imitation of "May '68", and the sad, unimaginative end of the magical Sixties.

The Sixties as a Clash of Generations: Righart

Hans Righart's study of the 'Endless Sixties' that came out in 1995 has been very influential, not in the least by his analytical use of the sociological concept of change through generations. Since the pioneering work of the sociologist Karl Mannheim in 1928 on generations, sociology and history have seen many interpretations in which social and historical phenomena are explained in terms of 'generations' or 'conflicts of generation'.[9] Mannheim proposed some criteria to recognise and define generations. To belong to a generation one has to share not only a range of years to be born in, but also a social and geographical environment in order to become a group of peers who feel connected. A generation can be marked especially by a collective experience during the adolescent years of mile stone events like an economic crisis or a war, but also by common values and norms. Within one generation there can be multiple 'sub generations'. These are groups of people, who share their difference from the dominant characteristics of a generation. In his study of the 'Endless Sixties' Hans Righart refers not only to Mannheim, but also to Robert Inglehart who had identified the emergence of a 'post-materialist' protest generation in the Sixties, and Helmut Schelsky who had described a silent generation that preceded the protest generation in his study of post-war German youth.[10] The members of this generation were born between 1930 and 1940 and were formed by the Second World War. They had learned to struggle to survive and turned sceptical,

8 Jan Willem Duyvendak, Hein-Anton van der Heijden, Ruud Koopmans and Luuk Wijmans, Tussen verbeelding en macht: 25 jaar nieuwe sociale bewegingen in Nederland, Amsterdam 1992.

9 Karl Mannheim, Das Problem der Generationen, in: Kölner Vierteljahreshefte für Soziologie, 7 (1928), 157–180. Already in 1977 Hans Jaeger showed the problematic use of generations in history, though he give some credit to Mannheim's article as signalling the beginning of a new, more sophisticated social-scientific interpretation. Hans Jaeger, Generationen der Geschichte: Überlegungen zu einer umstrittenen Konzeption, in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft, 3 (1977), 429–452. Somewhat earlier A. B. Spitzer showed himself even more critical: A. B. Spitzer, The Historical Problem of Generations, in: American Historical Review, 78 (1973), 1353–1385.

10 Robert Inglehart, The Silent Generation. Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics, Princeton 1977; Helmut Schelsky, Die skeptische Generation. Eine Soziologie der Deutschen Jugend, Düsseldorf/Köln 1957.

even hostile, to ideology. For them, it was everyday life that mattered most and their attitude could be described by the term 'conformist'.

Righart distinguished two important generations active in the turbulent years of the Sixties and Seventies. The oldest generation was the 'pre-war generation', born between 1910 and 1929. This generation was described as comprising sober and law-abiding people who kept very strict religious and sexual morals. The pre war generation was deeply shaken by the war and lost confidence in their ideas and attitudes as these had ended in such a disastrous war. Nevertheless, they were the Establishment in the Sixties.

The second generation, which Hans Righart called the 'protest generation', was born between 1940 and 1955. This generation was used to a certain level of wealth and wanted recognition for its own culture and its way of life. The members of this generation questioned the divisions and role patterns within society and were less interested in keeping up traditions for the sake of tradition itself. The historian sees the clash between this generation and the pre war generation as one of the major drives behind the rapid changes in Dutch society in the Sixties. According to this interpretation the people who were born in or after World War II distanced themselves from and rebelled against the people who were 'responsible' for that war, that is the pre-war generation, that itself, however, also doubted traditional values. Indeed, Righart sketched an even more dramatic scenario than usual with a double generation crisis haunting the Sixties.

The division of the population in two generations provides a gripping format which makes it possible to analyse the Sixties as a clash between old, worn-out, straight, authoritarian people and young, hopeful, engaged and 'gay' people. It is not hard to recognise a hierarchy of attractiveness and rhetoric of persuasion in this analysis. History, however, is hardly ever to be tamed by neat categories and divisions, even less when they are shaped as dichotomies. Thus, the 'anti-smoke magician' Robert Jasper Grootveld was, with his birth in 1932, rather an early representative of the 'silent' or 'sceptical generation' (in the analysis of Schelsky) than of the 'protest generation'. The turbulent satirical television show "Zo is het toevallig ook nog 's een keer" (1963–1966), a Dutch version of the British "That Was The Week That Was", was produced by a mixed bag of members of the pre war, the silent and the protest generations together.[11] The first and the most disturbing broadcast took place with a parody on the 'worship of the visual image' using paraphrases from the "Bible" in a mock devotion of the Television. Not only were the show and its makers (who included Gerard Reve) swamped with hate mail, there were also questions asked in Parliament. Another speech-making personality that helped to usher in social change was the 'television bishop' Monsignor Bekkers, who in the beginning of the Sixties made his weekly appearance in the Catholic news programme "Brandpunt" (Focal Point). In March 1963, for example, he frankly gave his opinion on the newly invented contraception pill. In his view the use of that pill was a

11 James Kennedy and Mirjam Prenger, De jaren zestig in Nederland, in: Historisch Nieuwsblad, 2 (1993), 28–31, 28.

private decision that had no connection to religion or the *Catholic Church*. He was born in 1908, so even from before the pre-war generation. And to name one last example: the rebel writer Reve and the so-called representative of the Establishment Klompé both belonged to the pre-war generation.

Given the many exceptions to the rule of the Sixties as the result of a clash of generations, with the protest generation as the main historical actor, we propose to look at another interpretation.[12]

The Sixties as Predestined Modernisation: Kennedy

At the same time when Righart's book on the 'Endless Sixties' came out, another groundbreaking interpretation of the Sixties was published by the Dutch-American (Calvinist) historian James Kennedy. He focused especially on the question as to why the Dutch Sixties had been relatively smooth and non-violent, and even playful in character as compared to the Sixties in many other countries. He found an answer to this question in the sympathy of the social and political elite ('the Establishment') towards the younger protest generation. In his opinion, the Calvinist tradition in the Netherlands had put its mark on Dutch politics and culture. In line with the Calvinistic view of predestination, so Kennedy argues, Dutch people generally believed that history unfolds itself without paying much attention to the will of humans. A progressive force, sometimes called "God's will" but also "modernisation", had already paved the way for history to follow. Humans could do little or nothing to stop the direction history took. In this view, the administrative and political elite, when confronted with the protest generation, thought it wiser to facilitate some of the changes these young folks demanded instead of clubbing them down. In this way, the changes could be controlled and excesses could be avoided.

In any case, the level of violence by the protesters and authorities alike was not to be compared with the violence abroad. In the Netherlands the protests were as much inflicted as facilitated and contained by the belief that the world was changing. The Establishment was less hostile, and sometimes even friendly towards the ideas for a new society. Although many angry and concerned reactions were present, the belief that change could

12 Righart died at the early age of 47, in 2001. In the posthumous book on the 'world wide sixties', in which he intended to conduct a comparative study of Great Britain, the United States and the Netherlands, he recognised that generation analysis was perhaps not as straightforward as he had assumed in his earlier study, and he broadened his conceptual framework to include (besides the generation theory) attention to a more cultural reading of political action and protest repertoires, the role of the media, and a critical awareness of the strong autobiographical contribution to sixties' historiography; cf. Hans Righart, De wereldwijde jaren zestig. Groot-Brittannië, Nederland, de Verenigde Staten, ed. by Paul Luykx and Niek Pas, Utrecht 2005; see also Paul Luykx and Hans Righart, Invented Generations?, in: ead. eds. Generatiemix. Leeftijdsgroepen en cultuur, Amsterdam/Antwerpen 1998, 196–223.

not be stopped softened the counter-offensives and turned stubborn traditional minds into a more flexible mood. Among many examples Kennedy mentions how in 1963 the pill was introduced on a large scale by the Dutch association for sexual reform – *Nederlandse Vereniging voor Seksuele Hervorming* (NVSH). Many Protestants had already accepted birth control and some influential Catholic bishops, like the earlier mentioned Bekkers, openly tolerated the practice. According to James Kennedy, this and many other examples show that the difference between the opposition culture and the dominant culture was indeed 'no deeper than a trench'. Under the tolerant eye of the Establishment, sexual liberation went as far as to demand abolition of age limits for sexual contacts between adults and children, the open sale of all kinds of drugs, the sale and production of pornography and experiments with euthanasia by respectable family doctors.

This attitude of understanding on the part of the elite towards the protesters – it was even suggested that Queen Juliana had sympathy for *Provo* – according to Kennedy, culminated in the person of Marga Klompé: "It is difficult indeed to find a more charitable person among the authorities within the Dutch cultural landscape than Marga Klompé, Minister of *CRM* between 1961 and 1967."[13] She showed understanding for the artists who occupied the *Rijksmuseum* room of the 'Nightwatch' (*Nachtwacht*), and in 1969 she defended the student protesters by highlighting their post materialism and glossing over their methods. Kennedy cites her saying that the majority of the Dutch in her eyes were rather 'bourgeois', and were therefore to blame for many of the social and political tensions of the period. Once she confessed that she had changed as well. Though Kennedy believes her to be sincere in her convictions he nevertheless emphasises her political astuteness and in the end of his passage on her concludes that she may well be seen as the most "typical practitioner of 'repressive tolerance'".

By invoking the term 'repressive tolerance', however, he suggests not only that his interpretation leans heavily on contemporary concepts, he also blurs his major paradigm in making belief and acquiescence in predestined progression and strategic repressive tolerance into identical phenomena. As for the latter, it was the influential philosopher Herbert Marcuse who invented that term in 1965 as part of his vision on capitalist society. Repressive tolerance is the conscious strategy of the elite in a liberal capitalist society to tolerate or disregard critical voices or action so that they loose their effect. The example brings out clearly how much the interpretations of Righart and Kennedy have in common, even if in Righart's view, the main protagonists were the protesters, while in Kennedy's interpretation the main historical actors were the Establishment or elite. Not only do both historians reproduce the terminologies of the Sixties, they are also both imprisoned in the rather neat categories of protest generation and establishment, young and old.

13 "Het is inderdaad moeilijk om tussen de gezagdragers binnen het Nederlandse culturele landschap een welwillender persoon te vinden dan Marga Klompé, minister van *CRM* tussen 1967 en 1971." Kennedy, Babylon, see note 3, 143.

The Attraction of Generations' Analysis

Not to diminish the value of both historians' ground-breaking, systematic and well argued studies, it is not difficult to see how their analytical models coincide well with the Sixties' terminology and the world-wide appearance of a rhetoric about protesters and Establishment, which explains part of the books' success. It explains also why for other historians who focused on different groups or events in more or less the same period a categorization in terms of generations seemed attractive.

Thus, for Anton Verbij who studied 'The Red Years' between 1965 and 1975, the student protests were the call to arms of a new generation of young intellectuals who would put their mark on the Seventies. These revolutionaries, who would form cells or groups of *Marxists*, *Marxist-Leninists*, or *Maoists*, had in general not been active in the Sixties' groups like *Provo*. Their 'Erwachen' (awakening) had been the occupation of the *Maagdenhuis* which tried to top the riot in Paris in 1968. A similar origin story (or a story of 'awakening') is told about the start of the second feminist wave. According to this narrative the 'girls', who participated in the Maagdenhuis occupation, were only allowed to prepare the lunch, while the boys did the 'actual' work. The discomfort with this division of labour was such a consciousness raising experience – so the narrative goes – that the girls started to question this gendered division of labour.

Both stories have been unmasked as (meaningful) myths. Although the occupation probably did mean an eye opener for many young students, to state that the Maagdenhuis occupation was the starting point for the revolutionary and radical movements in the Seventies is a gross exaggeration. Of course for many it was a 'historic event' for whoever was on the spot. As participant Wietske Miedema recalls: "For me, the occupation was a great experience, I felt as if I was high, really alert."[14] Miedema was a spokeswoman and had led the students into the building. Regarding its role in sparking feminist protest: "I did not notice anything like that [division of labour]." Indeed, it would be equally valid to say that the students movement and the feminist movement started with different events, such as the television broadcasting of the Vietnam War, the student protests in France and Germany, the murder of Martin Luther King, or the publication of the Dutch version of Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" by Joke Smit, entitled "Het onbehagen bij de vrouw"(The Discomfort in Woman) in November 1967.[15] Like Friedan Kool-Smit (later Smit) presented the dissatisfaction of housewives, whom she referred to as 'a herd of vacuum cleaning cattle', as experienced by herself, even if she was teaching at

14 Verbij, Jaren, see note 3, 47.

15 Cf. Joke Kool-Smit, Het onbehagen bij de vrouw, in: De Gids, 130 (1967), 267–281. Joke Smit is seen as one of the most important representatives of the second wave of feminism in the Netherlands, even if (or perhaps in part because) she died of cancer in 1981. She had a sharp and witty pen and wrote several articles that became classical. For a discussion of the 1967 article in relation to the question of how 'the personal became political' as a defining motto of second wave feminism, cf. Irene Costera Meijer, Het persoonlijke wordt politiek. Feministische bewustwording in Nederland 1965–1980, Amsterdam 1996.

Amsterdam University. Both Friedan and Kool-Smit identified not as experts writing about women, but rather as fellow sufferers from the discrepancy between the reality and the image of women's lives (Friedan), or from unequal opportunities of men and women to become autonomous beings (Smit). Almost one year later – and thus some time before the Dutch student protests –, the first second wave feminist organisation *Man Vrouw Maatschappij* (MVM, Man Woman Society) materialised.

Given this time frame that contradicts a neat original story in a 'major protest moment' for the women's movement in the Netherlands, it is rather surprising that gender historian Anneke Ribberink felt compelled to use the generations concept following Righart in her history of *MVM*, even though she explicitly had to add Schelsky's bridge (sceptical or silent) generation. Ribberink, in an otherwise well researched and important study, concludes that the first feminist organisation of the second wave, *MVM*, was founded by members not of the protest generation, but of the silent generation while some of its important members were even from the pre-war generation.[16] In order to make this (paradoxical) claim, she has to amend the generation thesis that Righart employed for the Sixties 'in general', to reconcile the feminist protest of *MVM* women with their descent from the silent generation. She does so by creating the feminist pioneers of *MVM* as the 'leading edge' of their generation, and so identifying them as a sub-generation (of the silent generation). In this way, however, all categorisations or divisions based on age would remain. But how many exceptions can the analysis endure before it collapses? Aren't there too many exceptions to the rule of generation analysis of the Sixties? So once again: why this attraction of an analysis in generations?

In my opinion the attraction lies in its repetition of historical (Sixties') terminology, as well as in the gendered rhetoric of power that is always at work in the generational argument.[17] Such an interpretation easily speaks to the memory of those who had been

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Recently an interesting book length biography of Joke Smit came out: Marja Vuijsje, Joke Smit. Biografie van een feministe, Amsterdam/Antwerpen 2008. Of course Joke Smit figures also prominently in Anneke Ribberink, Leidsvrouwen en zaakwaarneemsters, Een geschiedenis van de aktiegroep Man Vrouw Maatschappij (MVM) 1968–1973, Hilversum1998, which is predominantly about the history of *MVM*.

16 For instance Gé Enters (1921), Harriet Freezer (1911), Wim Hora Adema (1914) and Hanny van den Horst (1925); cf. Ribberink, Leidsvrouwen, see note 15, 47.

17 See my own analysis of the way in which 'university women', from about 1920 (and following an essay by Marianne Weber on the subject), made a division in generations to analyze the integration of women in higher education: Mineke Bosch, Het geslacht van de wetenschap. Vrouwen en hoger onderwijs in Nederland, 1878–1948, Amsterdam 1994, 51–57. The first generation was always described as comprising lonely women, serious, manly and courageous, the second as forming women's collectives which allowed them to behave in a more feminine way though they were still aware of the burden of proof on women, while the members of the third generation were fully capable of developing their femininity and enjoying their studies, rather than feeling obliged to make a success of it. A similar pattern is seen nowadays in claims to second and third wave feminisms, the 'seventies' generation' comprising unattractive, (manly) lesbians claiming equality and autonomy, while women of the third wave can be more 'themselves' and do not need to force themselves into equality.

there and already then participated in cultural conflicts over interpretation and power. Interestingly, a good way to illustrate this is by showing how Ribberink's book can actually be seen as an extension of the struggle over 'priority' or 'origin' in the invention of the second wave of feminism: did second wave feminism start with Joke Smit and *MVM*, or was the 'real start' of the movement when 'young and sexy' (Marxist) *Dolle Mina's* (Mad Mina's) took over from old(er), academically formed, social liberal and respectable *MVM* women? It is obvious that the latter had much more difficulty to get positive media attention for it's approach to gender issues, and they certainly have resented the way in which *Dolle Mina* movement snapped up the media with their captivating actions such as claiming public toilets for women, picketing at marriage ceremonies in the city hall, or disturbing the elections for a Miss Holland. *Dolle Mina's* did so moreover by explicitly posing as charming, feminine and playful young women, thereby distancing themselves from older generations of feminists and presenting themselves as not only ideologically more radical with regard to equal rights rhetoric, but also as younger. Implicitly and sometimes explicitly, the comparison was with the images of first wave feminists and suffragettes, but also with the older (impressive) intellectual women academics who figured so prominently in *MVM*. Thus, historian and former *Dolle Mina* Selma Leydesdorff said in 1997 in a radio-interview:

> They [the *MVM* women, M. B.] were already established feminists and we were actually terrified of them. Because they were big ladies, who had a lot to tell and we were activists who held demonstrations. They were also much more politically organized, and had been thinking about the political consequences of feminism, while we were just being angry.[18]

Interestingly, in *MVM* circles several early publications have tried to downplay *Dolle Mina* as a plaything of left wing male intellectuals who wanted to put a halt to *their more structural* efforts to change gender relations.[19] In so doing, however, they reinforced the idea of a conflict of generations, making *MVM* wiser, but also older than the hotbeds of *Dolle Mina*.

In the early historiography of second wave feminism in many countries the (early) Sixties' organisations, such as the *National Organization for Women* (NOW) in the United States and *MVM* in the Netherlands, lost out to the more radical and socialist action groups that sprang up at the end of the Sixties, who claimed to have started the second wave of feminism, and therefore represented it more fully than their imme-

18 Ribberink, Leidsvrouwen, see note 15, 134.

19 Saskia Bunsingh (pseudonym of the analytical philosopher Else Barth), Strategie van de knechtende moraal, in: Hollands Maandblad, 320/321 (1974), 7–11.

diate predecessors.[20] In 1996 Irene Costera Meijer redressed this balance for the Netherlands in favour a more complex beginning of second wave feminism, which implied a certain rehabilitation of *MVM*.[21] Ribberink's book was far less successful in this respect for her recourse to the generational oppositions that stem from the time she tries to understand. Though saving *MVM* from the fate of oblivion, Ribberink nevertheless relegates *MVM* to an 'in-between' role of being in the vanguard of the silent generation, acting temporarily as 'caretaking managers' of the protest generation. Not only does this metaphor (which is in the title of her book) suggest a main role for the protest generation and *Dolle Mina*, it also takes for granted and assesses that *Dolle Mina* should be seen as much younger indeed, and as rooted in the 'protest generation'.

In the Sixties, power struggles were fought in terms of young and old, rebels versus Establishment. Historians, however, have to be careful in reproducing distinctions and categorisations that were also used in the time under scrutiny, even if they are translated into theoretical terms that are borrowed from established sociologists. Current Sixties historiography is therefore not very helpful in my opinion to give meaning to the Kiss in an adequate and subtle way. To think that the Kiss was in fact a one-way provocative act of rebellion on the part of Reve (Righart), and endured with the leniency that was characteristic of Klompé (Kennedy) is mainly convincing because it repeats the old story, and perhaps also because it sits well with accepted gender codes. However, one only has to look at the television recordings to see that Klompé did not simply 'endure the act'; she responded to his action, in my view, in a natural way. The standard view is not only one of simplification towards Reve, who was such an interesting and unique bundle of contradictions, but also toward Klompé. Though one of the first men who openly lived as a homosexual, he nevertheless refused to conform to gay politics. Moreover he converted officially to Catholicism, the church that condemned homosexuality and held conservative views on many other issues that were heavily debated in the Sixties: sex, birth control, euthanasia or the role of women. And although he seemed to provoke his new found religion with his portrayal of having sex with God in the disguise of a donkey, his defence at the 'Donkey trial' convinced the larger public and Klompé that he did act on the basis of a sincere personal belief. Indeed, in her presentation speech of the "P. C. Hooft Prize", Klompé quotes exten-

20 Irene Costera Meijer, Het persoonlijke wordt politiek. Feministische bewustwording in Nederland 1965–1980, Amsterdam 1996, 107–108. Meijer starts to rewrite this plot by discussing the relation between *MVM* and *Dolle Mina* and their changing relations to feminist thinking, especially about experience and women's relation to her self.

21 Recently the Belgian historian Leen van Molle similarly did a convincing effort to complicate the historiography of the 'second wave' or 'new feminism' in Flanders, Belgium, liberating it from the heroic descriptions of the historical actors themselves. Leen van Molle, De nieuwe vrouwenbeweging in Vlaanderen: een andere lezing, in: Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine/Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste geschiedenis, 34, 3 (2004), 359–397.

sively from this "Defence of Poetry" that she called a literary masterpiece: "Whether it is legally sound I don't know, but it did convince me of the sincerity of your intentions."[22]

The standard view is also one of simplification towards Klompé. In fact it is rather preposterous that Kennedy chooses Klompé as the figure best capable of representing the soft Establishment, who acted in consignment of a Calvinist world view. She was Catholic and a woman, and as such had herself fought many a battle to be included in the Dutch political Establishment. This inclusion was partly the by-product of the rapid and successful Catholic emancipation after World War II, partly the result of Catholic women's pressure to be recognised as professional and political co-workers. The women who took the lead in this struggle were not dedicated housewives or mothers themselves, explicitly carving out a space for the aspiring Catholic women between convent life and motherhood. As such, many of them did not lead comfortable (and respectable) heterosexual lives, but created alternative households or families, or 'organisations of intimacy'.

It is therefore plausible that Klompé recognised in Reve someone who wanted to shock the bourgeois world into action while at the same time clinging to the values of religion and 'proper behaviour'. Indeed, it was her personal decision as a Minister to give him the prize. In doing so, in a way she distanced herself for the second time in a short period from her Catholic pal, the former Prime-minister Joseph Cals with whom she is always mentioned in one breath as both being progressive (but regentesque) Catholics. The first time she went against him was in 1966 when she voted him down with the rest of the Catholic fraction. She did so again in 1969 when she granted the State prize for literature to the man whom Cals at the P. C. Hooft-presentation in 1951, in his speech for the laureate Vestdijk, openly had criticised for his immoral writing and whom he had later denied a scholarship. In other words, Klompé may have had her own very personal reasons to honour the 'citizen-writer' and to declare in her speech that she decided to give him the prize 'from my firm conviction'. Is it not likely that Reve wanted to thank her for that from the bottom of his heart, that a kiss was just the way to do that (though I am afraid he would not have kissed a male minister ...), and that she reacted as she would do with any such kiss?

Many Revolutions and Many Revolutionaries

This interpretation is of course indebted to feminist readings of women like Klompé, but it is also in line with the popular historian Geert Mak who recently conveyed his view of the

22 "Of het juridisch sluit, wil ik niet beoordelen, maar wel heeft het mij kunnen overtuigen van de eerlijkheid van Uw bedoelingen." Toespraak door minister Klompé, Extra Van het Reve nummer, in: Dialoog. Tijdschrift voor homofilie en maatschappij, (1969), 36. Speech by Klompé in the special issue of "Dialogue. Journal for Homosexuality and Society".

period.[23] In the instalment on the Sixties of his much appraised television series "In Europe" he shows in a very personal way how a modest Protestant boy and the son of an orthodox protestant minister from Friesland's countryside turned into one of the 'romantic heroes' that play such an important role in the histories of the Sixties.[24] In doing so, he also mentions the pitfalls of the revolutionary élan, as well as the masculinity of the project and the self-congratulatory way in which the Sixties are remembered by the historical characters themselves. Interestingly, he concludes this documentary with the statement that there was perhaps not so much one revolution of the young against the old, but rather that it was a time full of small revolutions and many small revolutionaries. Another way to formulate this is to say that it was a time when the one hardly perceptible revolution was followed by another. As an example he suggests that perhaps one such small revolution took place in the Dutch pharmaceutical company, *Organon* in Oss, which produced the first contraception pill ("Lyndiol") available here. And as for the many revolutionaries of that era, he states: "Maybe the most important Dutch revolutionary was the well-behaved Catholic minister Marga Klompé who with her General Assistance Law made it possible for women to divorce."[25]

I agree with Mak's view that we should stop to focusing only on the most visible and publicised moments of protest that privilege young men and some women (of *Dolle Mina*). The idea that there were many small revolutions and many revolutionaries which were part of the long process of modernisation established well before World War II, is more attractive to me for its democratising tendency and its ability to look beyond the most visible historical characters. I also agree that many of those small revolutions took place in the private sphere and often on the very personal level of religious belief or the organisation of love and private life. That perspective is clearly more capable of bringing in women as important agents of change. The only objection I have is to his pejorative adjective 'well-behaved' in respect of Klompé. This adjective reproduces a gendered and historical image of her, and testifies of an ignorance of women like Klompé who in the short twentieth century period between 1918 and 1968 were important agents of change even if they contradict all preconceived ideas of what innovators, rebels or revolutionaries look like. I think it is time to honour their existence and role in social and political history. That will change not only our perception of the Sixties, but also of feminisms and women's movements.

23 Geert Mak is a prolific popular historian who wrote several historical bestsellers, such as a book on the Frisian village where he grew up: "Jorwerd: The Death of the Village in Late Twentieth-Century Europe" (2001), or "My Father's Century" (1999, in Dutch) which deals with the history of the last century from the perspective of his father's life. A few years ago he was appointed professor at the *University of Amsterdam*. In 2008 he received the "Leipziger Buch Preis" for "In Europe. Travels through the Twentieth Century" (2007) a book about European history. For feminist interpretations of women like Klompé see Mineke Bosch, Paradoxical Aspects of the Personal in Political Biography: Observations from a Dutch Perspective, in: Journal of Women's History, 21, 4 (2009) (forthcoming).

24 Cf. <http://weblogs.vpro.nl/ineuropa/2009/02/03/vodcast-10-1968-amsterdam-parijs-berlijn/>; visited: 2009-07-28.

25 In Europa, see note 24.